

Chaplain recalls seeing tragedy of Holocaust

By Diane Giannelli
NC News Service

On April 11, 1945, the U.S. Army's 104th Timberwolf Division dispatched its medical battalion to deliver assistance to a little camp about 60 miles southwest of Berlin.

"We came upon a world of such horror and tragedy," said Dominican Father Edward Paul Doyle, the Catholic chaplain whose division liberated Nordhausen, a subcamp of the infamous Buchenwald.

"I've seen pictures, but being there outvisions them all," he said.

FATHER DOYLE, now 77 and a chaplain in Rhode Island, was interviewed in conjunction with 40th anniversary commemorations of the liberation of the concentration camps.

Nationwide "Days of Remembrance" were being held the week of April 14, culminating in an April 21 "Evening of Remembrance" in Philadelphia bringing together liberators and survivors of the camps.

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The events were being sponsored by the U.S. Holocaust Memorial Council, established by Congress in 1980 to coordinate Holocaust remembrance activities.

There were about 1,000 survivors at the Nordhausen camp, Father Doyle recalled. "But they were just

barely alive."

"After we took care of the living, we buried about 5,000 bodies on a hill outside the town — all mutilated, beaten and starved skeletons

"We went into town and rounded up able-bodied men to come and help us bury them. They said they

were unaware of the goings-on at the death camp," Father Doyle said.

THE PRIEST SAID that he himself had no idea what to expect before he arrived at the concentration camp.

Many people blame God for allowing the Holocaust to happen, Father Doyle said, but he said he sees it as a "tragic failure of man."

"It isn't God who failed," he said, "it's man who failed."

"We need God more than ever, if

this can happen to man."

After the war, Father Doyle, who rose to the rank of major, returned to teaching theology and personal guidance at Providence College and other Dominican schools, and now serves as chaplain at Summit Medical Center in Providence.

But every year he meets the 104th Division for a reunion, and every year the division holds a memorial service for the thousands they buried at Nordhausen, as well as for those who went before them.